transactional cost and time with a view to providing level playing field to Indian exporters. These measures include extension of zero-duty EPCG shceme to textile sector and certain sub-sectors of chemicals; exemption of additional customs duty under zero duty EPCG scheme for marine and software sectors; introduction of Annual Advance Licence Scheme; rationalisation of EOU/EPZ scheme; recognition for export of services, decentralisation of decision making and time bound disposal of various categories of applications.

Potential for Newsprint Production

1852. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that we have a higher potential for newsprint production now; and

(b) what steps are being taken by Government to increase indigenous newsprint production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government has taken a number of steps to increase the indigenous production of newsprint which include:—

(i) Newsprint Industry has been delicensed subject to locational policy.

(ii) Newsprint has been exempted from excise duty.

(iii) There is a concessional rate of Customs Duty @ 5% on pulp for manufacture of newsprint.

(iv) With a view to encouraging the indigenous availability of newsprint, such paper mills which are producing newsprint conforming to BIS standards are placed in Schedule-I to the Newsprint Control Order, 1962 declaring them as mills manufacturing newsprint.

Import of Newsprint

1853. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the quantity of newsprint expected to be imported this year;

(b) whether we are increasingly becoming import-dependent on newsprint; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The total import of newsprint during the period April to August, 1999 was 1.53 lakh MT as per the provisional import figures available with the Government. The import of newsprint is allowed without a licence to actual users. The total quantity expected to be imported this year will depend on demand and supply situation in the market.

(b) and (c) The demand for newsprint in the country is met both by import and indigenous production. It will be seen from these figures that the quantity of newsprint imported is not showing an increasing trend. The relevant figures for the last three years are as follows:

Period	Imports Quantity (in lakh tonnes)	Value (Rs. crores)
1996-97	5.47	1077.43
1997-98	5.39	1146.98
1998-99	4.26	1003.62

News-item captioned 'Desh mein Udyog ki halat chintajanak'

†1854. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in Dainik Jagran, dated 28th November, 1999, under the caption "Desh mein Udyog ki halat chintajanak";

(b) whether Government have prepared any action-plan to improve the condition of industries;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) by when the plan is likely to be implemented?

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.